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MEMORANDUM

RM-5617-ISA/ARPA (Part I)

JULY 1968

NEGOTIATIONS AND VIETNAM:
A CASE STUDY OF THE 1954
GENEVA CONFERENCE

Melvin Gurtov

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PREFACE

This historical study of policymaking and diplomacy during the period of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina was prepared as part of The RAND Corporation's continuing research on the tactics of war termination in Vietnam. This work is being done under a contract with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense.

RAND Memorandum RM-5617-ISA/ARPA consists of two parts, bound separately. Part One, "A Concise Narrative, with Conclusions," contains a Preface and Summary for the entire Memorandum, and is classified Secret; there are only four source references. Part Two, "A Fully Documented Account," contains a more detailed narrative and a complete set of source references; it is classified Top Secret. (The conclusions given in Part One, Section IX, are not repeated in Part Two.)

The Memorandum embodies the result of research in the files of the Department of Defense and the Secretariat and Historical Office, Department of State. The materials used are mostly staff and policy papers, memoranda, and cables prepared by various divisions of both departments. Inevitably, therefore, this is nearly as much a study of American diplomacy during the first half of 1954 as of the Geneva Conference itself. As far as possible, the positions, motives, and objectives of each of the nine participants in the conference are brought forward in an effort to understand what happened at the conference and why.

The research task was made immeasurably easier through the cooperation of the Historical Studies Division, Historical Office, Department of State, whose own study of the Geneva Conference provided a ready source of reference to the many cables cited below. All selection from and interpretation of the cables and other sources, however, are the author's.

Part One of the present study begins with an introduction to the background of the Geneva Conference. A discussion of the conduct and structure of diplomacy at the conference leads into the historical narrative. Sections III-VI deal with the conference in terms of American diplomacy, objectives of the French and British delegations, and the negotiating positions adopted by the Communist side. The presentation is primarily chronological, but the study emphasizes the jockeying for position over major issues, instead of going into the details of all the plenary and restricted sessions. In Section VII, the accomplishments of the conference are assessed in terms of the expectations and objectives of the participants. Section IX (Part One) on the lessons of Geneva, attempts to extract from the experience of 1954 those tactics and avenues of diplomacy that may be applicable to a negotiated settlement of the present conflict.

The extended narrative of Part Two follows the same scheme, but omits the conclusions that form the last Section of Part One.

SUMMARY

When the Geneva Conference on Indochina convened its first plenary session on May 8, 1954, months of frenetic diplomatic activity by the United States had failed to coalesce British and French sentiment behind military intervention to save Dienbienphu. Disunity in the Western camp contrasted with a solid Communist front formed by Soviet, Chinese, and Viet Minh negotiators. This Memorandum deals mainly with U.S. policy toward the conference, the tactics employed during the negotiations, the interests and objectives of the nine participating nations, the reasons why the final settlement fell far short of a victor's peace, and the lessons of Geneva.

As a diplomatic exercise, the conference was a challenge to any negotiator. Real bargaining was carried out less in formal sessions than in private bilateral meetings. Tangential issues, such as representation for the Communist insurgents in Laos and Cambodia, and the make-up of a neutral nations control body, kept the conferees from making progress for several weeks. Moreover, growing communication gaps aroused hostility and suspicion: the Americans refused to meet with the Chinese and had to be content with second-hand information from French, British, and Soviet sources; the British feared private Franco-American understandings regarding direct military intervention; and the Vietnamese loyal to Bao Dai were successfully kept unaware by the French of ongoing discussions with the Viet Minh to partition the country.

The United States approached the conference with serious misgivings that multiplied once talks began.

Faced with a deteriorating military situation in Indochina after the fall of Dienbienphu, the Eisenhower Administration drew up instructions for its delegation designed to maintain an influential American role in the talks without committing the United States to a final settlement that would amount, it was believed, to a French sell-out. Dulles early formulated the notion of "disassociation" from the final terms if they conflicted with the global American policy of stemming Communist expansion.

Early U.S. pessimism about the outcome of the conference found expression in a policy decision that an overall political settlement in Indochina would have to precede a carefully supervised cease-fire under United Nations auspices. The Communists could hardly be expected to approve this arrangement: Pham Van Dong's first proposals (May 10), making a cease-fire contingent upon a French withdrawal from the three Indochinese states and the establishment of a political process bound to result in a Communist takeover, only reaffirmed American anxieties. The French were expected to continue fighting and to stick to rigid terms for a settlement. The Administration concluded, in fact, that military victory in Indochina was, despite the bleak picture at the front, the only reasonable alternative to a Communist victory through continued pressure on the battlefield and at the bargaining table.

During May and part of June, while the negotiations wore on without substantial progress, the French government of Joseph Laniel sought to revive the "united action" formula for which Dulles had unsuccessfully sought approval in the spring. For several weeks messages went

back and forth between Paris and Washington on the conditions for American intervention. As set by the President, these encompassed a series of political reforms and formal processes the French were required to approve before joint consultations might take place on military involvement. The French response to the Administration's cautious approach to united action revealed, first, that Paris was interested in having the United States join the struggle only in the event the Geneva deliberations collapsed and, second, that Paris was seeking to exploit the fact of active bilateral negotiations on intervention for the political benefits France's negotiators might hope to derive in confronting the Communist side. Washington gradually became aware of the French game, decided that France could not have an indefinite option on American intervention, and, in mid-June, withdrew united action altogether. With that move, the United States ended consideration of a military alternative to negotiations, looked to the British for support of a post-Vietnam collective security arrangement for Southeast Asia, and prepared to extract from the conference the best terms possible under military circumstances that bordered on collapse.

Negotiations at Geneva, meanwhile, did not afford much ground for optimism that a reasonable settlement could be quickly achieved. On three outstanding issues -- separation of the belligerent forces, political settlements for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, and control and supervision of the armistice -- the Chinese and Soviets made clear their interest in seeing the talks reach fruition, but their concessions were not of a nature

to justify a belief that the conference would fast be concluding its work. Before the conference adjourned in mid-June to allow the heads of delegation to return home for consultation, only one major breakthrough had been achieved: largely at Chou En-lai's initiative, the West had at least been able to obtain Communist consent to separating military and political problems as they applied individually to the three Indochinese states.

With the adjournment, Eden joined Churchill on a trip to Washington, where the two governments were able to reach agreement on a broad set of negotiating principles (the Seven Points) that closely paralleled Administration thinking. An accord was also reached on the desirability of constructing a regional defense organ should talks at Geneva fail. Nevertheless, Dulles remained convinced that the British, like the French, would not take the Seven Points seriously enough to stick by them under Communist pressure. For the United States the bilateral talks were mainly important in that they gave the Administration the occasion to make clear in advance of the final round at Geneva that the Government would almost certainly not go beyond agreeing to respect the settlement terms.

Between late June and early July, the conferees began to make noticeable headway on questions relating to a territorial division, Vietnamese elections, and a neutral control commission. Moreover, following Chou En-lai's meeting with Ho Chi Minh on Chinese territory, the Viet Minh may have been advised not to press their offensive, for it might undercut Chou's successful diplomatic ventures in India and Burma and would threaten to reverse what little progress had been made toward a

settlement. And at the very time the stage was being set for further Viet Minh diplomatic retreat, Dulles was bolstering the French position by a trip to Paris where he obtained French agreement to the Seven Points. After considerable debate, the new Mendès-France government received a quid pro quo for vowing to make the Seven Points France's bargaining position: Washington agreed that Under Secretary Smith should return to Geneva as a demonstration of allied unity in the last stages of the discussions. Despite Dulles's personal skepticism about Mendès-France's adherence to the Seven Points, the French did prove willing to abide by them. As a consequence, France got an acceptable settlement, the powers took account of Chinese security interests in Indochina, the Soviet Union ceased to be concerned about a possible widening of the war or about French adoption of the European Defense Community (EDC) treaty, and it became clear that Viet Minh and Vietnamese interests alike were not to be given the same weight as those of their more powerful allies.

The final military agreements and Declaration fulfilled the objectives of the participants in varying degrees. While most of the participants apparently looked to eventual Vietnamese unification, the practical effect of the accords was to prevent it. By creating two zones and two civil administrations the conferees, perhaps inadvertently, had contributed to the consolidation of two politically and economically divergent regimes that were very unlikely to reach agreement on the procedures for reuniting the country.

For the Communist side, the conference had mixed results. Although Vietnamese unity was not a priority objective of China or the Soviet Union, neither power may have expected that a South Vietnamese regime would survive until the national elections. Ho Chi Minh may have been persuaded to accept a temporary partition by the argument that the certain collapse of a South Vietnamese government would make the question of elections irrelevant. The Soviet Union's major objectives in any case seemed to be to avert a major war crisis over Indochina, to reduce the prospects for successful passage of EDC, to heighten the prestige of the Soviet Union as a world peacemaker, and to enhance Communist China's image as part of Moscow's drive for leadership of the "peaceful coexistence" movement. The Chinese were primarily motivated toward a settlement by the opportunity to propel China forward as a major Asian power whose voice in Asian councils could not be ignored. In working to bring the conference to a successful conclusion, the CPR probably also was as conscious as the USSR of the danger that the United States might resort to military intervention. Anyway, China was satisfied that Laos and Cambodia had been effectively neutralized, and could feel secure in the knowledge that northern Vietnam would be in friendly hands. Basic Viet Minh interests had been satisfied with the division of Vietnam. At that point Moscow and Peking evidently felt that their interests called for consolidating diplomatic gains rather than jeopardizing them through continued warfare.

For the American Administration, the priority items as the conference closed were two-fold. First, with respect to South Vietnam, the goal was not so much to

preserve a non-Communist regime as to maximize the Saigon government's chances of surviving to pose an authentic challenge in the elections of 1956. Second, the governments of Laos and Cambodia, privately assured at Geneva of American concern for their security, were somehow to be brought within the purview of the new Southeast Asia defense organization which the United States hoped would prevent a falling domino effect among the states of the area.

The 1954 Geneva experience may have important lessons for the present conflict in Vietnam. However unlikely a "second Geneva" may seem, there is some ground for questioning the usual assumption that it would not be in American interests to seek one. Additional Communist participants in negotiations on Vietnam -- including the National Liberation Front -- might complicate rather than strengthen Hanoi's position by increasing the opportunities for division on such issues as troop withdrawal and the ramifications of a political settlement. Saigon's influence, on the other hand, could be reduced if the United States were willing to limit South Vietnam's role primarily to on-the-spot talks with Viet Cong representatives to obtain a cease-fire. This policy would leave the United States in full control of negotiations for political and military settlements. In the realm of tactics, Geneva would seem to indicate, first, that an ambiguous commitment to a negotiated settlement can have far greater value than a clear-cut disposition to accept terms; second, that the threat to use force, coupled with a reputation for being callous and somewhat unrestrained in the use of force, can be more valuable to one's

bargaining position than force already applied before talks begin.

Geneva 1954 may also demonstrate the value of treating all issues (as they relate to Vietnam) as negotiable -- including those to which the United States attaches little importance or a low probability of acceptance by the opposition -- and of not conceding any gain to the opponent in advance. Moreover, whether one is negotiating or has concluded a settlement, the 1954 conference suggests that one's troops, present in large numbers in the war zone, confer great influence on one's own side, even when military circumstances are extremely adverse and even if the final terms demand a withdrawal of one's forces and bases.

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PART ONE

A CONCISE NARRATIVE, WITH CONCLUSIONS

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I. INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND TO THE CONFERENCE*

On February 18, 1954, a joint communiqué from Berlin, issued by the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and France, announced that in late April the Big Four and other parties concerned would meet at Geneva to seek a peaceful solution of the eight-year-old war in Indochina. Between those dates, the Western allies engaged in a series of discussions centered upon American proposals for direct intervention, while the Communist side -- the USSR, Communist China (CPR), and the Viet Minh -- worked to ensure that they would negotiate at the forthcoming Geneva Conference from a position of strength.

Having reluctantly accepted the idea of a negotiated settlement in Indochina, the Eisenhower Administration found it equally difficult to persuade France and Great Britain that fundamental changes in the war were necessary before the start of the conference. The troubles with France had begun in mid-1953 when the French Government gave its conditional approval to the Navarre Plan, which provided for radically new French field tactics and a build-up of the Vietnamese National Army (VNA). Americans were disappointed in their hope that assistance in money and war materiel would induce the French to commit themselves to a program to attract native Indochinese into close military and political collaboration with the colonial governments, especially in Vietnam. Nor was France amenable to American suggestions that the Military

* Sections I-VIII (Part One) give a condensed version of the longer, fully documented historical narrative and analysis presented in Sections X-XVII (Part Two).

Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG) play a larger role in French planning. Through most of the Indochina crisis, indeed, France capitalized on American fears that the National Assembly would reject the European Defense Community (EDC) treaty and that the French would pull out of Indochina. Thus they were able to gain U.S. aid without having to make commensurate concessions on Vietnamese independence or tactical planning. American attempts to make such concessions a condition of aid were never followed through, and whatever leverage on French policy-making in Indochina the United States possessed was left largely unexploited.

For the most part, France's rejection of American conditions and suggestions was based on the Laniel government's conviction, zealously adopted by French civil and military authorities in Indochina, that the United States would be intruding in France's domain. A systematic policy of restrictions on American officials in the field prevented the United States from making independent evaluations of the war's progress, so that Washington was for many months badly informed and unduly optimistic about the French Union army's chances against the Viet Minh. In late March and April 1954, when it became clear to Washington that the Navarre Plan had failed and that (in Secretary of State Dulles's words) "united action" was necessary to prevent Indochina from falling to the Communists, the French revealed that their distrust of American "interference" in the field extended to any plans for overt American air-naval involvement. The Laniel government was perfectly amenable to localized American intervention at Dienbienphu to save the besieged French

army from disaster; but it stood firmly opposed to Dulles's concept of collective (Western-Asian) defense in a security organization that would, if necessary, intervene to prevent the "loss" of Indochina. France's requests for assistance at Dienbienphu were entirely consistent with a long-standing policy that looked to a negotiated settlement of the war on "honorable" terms at the same time as it hoped to be in the best possible military position at the time negotiations began.

Opposition to "united action" was no less stubborn in London. The British, like the French, were suspicious of American intentions, though for different reasons. To the Churchill government, the United States, even while proclaiming a strong desire to avoid open conflict with Communist China, was tending precisely in that direction by insisting on the formation of a collective security pact prior to the start of the Geneva Conference. Eisenhower's letter to Churchill on April 4, 1954, could only have reinforced the latter's alarm, for the President described united action as an attempt to make China abandon support of the Viet Minh or face the prospect of large-scale allied involvement in Vietnam. Although the British were not asked to make substantial ground troop commitments to a united action, they felt that their approval might be interpreted as condoning a widening of the war so as to risk bringing in the Chinese who, the British argued, could not possibly be expected to cease assistance they had been providing since 1950. London therefore told Dulles it would not approve united action and preferred to await the outcome of the negotiations before deciding whether the Indochina situation warranted

resort to military alternatives. The British were perfectly willing to talk about regional defense in the Far East, but only after the results of the negotiations were in. Until then, they said, they would limit themselves to providing full diplomatic support to the French search for a peaceful solution.

As the conference opened, then, differences among the allies were acute. The French had cleverly benefited from the American assistance program without bringing in the Americans in full force. But they had been unable to save Dienbienphu from being overrun on May 7. Washington felt the British had been the primary obstacle to united action and accused them of having been so blinded by their self-interest in other areas of Southeast Asia that they failed to appreciate the vast strategic importance to the Free World of saving Indochina.

Communist unity on the eve of the conference was more a matter of Sino-Soviet agreement on the desirability of negotiations than of complete accord among the USSR, the CPR, and the Viet Minh. In the aftermath of Stalin's death, Soviet foreign policy under Malenkov had altered considerably. Domestic priorities no doubt influenced the regime's proclaimed hopes for a reduction in international tension. Peking, more intimately involved in the Viet Minh cause, stepped up its assistance to General Giap's forces between February and April 1954, but also agreed with Moscow on the desirability of convening an international conference, which China would attend, to end the fighting. The limited available evidence suggests that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) alone among the three Communist countries considered the call for

negotiations premature and urged that they be preceded by intensified military efforts. Ho's much-publicized offer in late November 1953 to talk with the French was intended more to influence French domestic and official opinion and to demoralize Franco-Vietnamese troops than to evince sincere interest in arriving at an equitable settlement. In ensuing months, DRV broadcasts showed a far greater interest in first achieving a clear-cut military victory in the Tonkin Delta and parts of Laos than in engaging in discussions while French forces remained scattered throughout Indochina.

Strength and weakness seemed to be the dominant characteristics of the Communist and Western positions, respectively. As we shall see, however, interaction between and within the two sides was to make clear that the Geneva Conference would not be the setting for a victor's peace.

II. THE CONDUCT AND STRUCTURE OF DIPLOMACY

One of the first agreements reached at the Geneva Conference occurred in the course of a conversation between V. M. Molotov and Anthony Eden on May 5, when the Soviet foreign minister backed up the foreign secretary's assertion that this negotiation was the most difficult he had ever encountered. Indeed, it seems at first glance somewhat paradoxical that the Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference (May 8-July 21) should have resulted in a settlement within less than a dozen weeks, given the unusual difficulties facing the negotiators on both sides. A list of the chief negotiators follows:

United Kingdom

Anthony Eden

United States

General Walter Bedell Smith
U. Alexis Johnson

Chinese People's Republic

Chou En-lai
Chang Wen-t'ien
Li K'e-nung

Vietnam

Dac Khe
Tran Van Do

Laos

Phoui Sananikone

Cambodia

Tep Phan
Sam Sary

Viet Minh

Pham Van Dong

France

Georges Bidault
Jean Chauvel
Pierre Mendès-France

USSR

Vyacheslav Molotov

Key issues were postponed until the eleventh hour while debate wore endlessly on over relatively insignificant matters; contact among the delegations was

limited by ideological prejudices and political antagonisms, forcing some delegates to act as mediators no less than as representatives of national interests; and major agreements were reached outside the special framework for discussions that the conferees had taken a month to build. A look into the conduct and structure of diplomacy at Geneva may provide more than a little of the conference "atmosphere," for it was the diplomatic process that produced what are now called the Geneva Accords.

1. THE REPRESENTATION QUESTION

The first major road block in the negotiations was the Communist claims concerning the representation of parties not present at the conference. Since the conference had already begun when these claims were brought forward, the chances of expanding the list of invited parties were very limited. Nevertheless, through fourteen restricted and seven plenary sessions,* bitter controversy raged over Communist insistence that the Viet Minh-led Free Cambodian (Khmer Issarak) and Free Laotian (Pathet Lao) forces were entitled to be seated beside representatives of the Royal Governments of Cambodia and Laos. Not until June 16, when Premier

* In all, the Geneva Conference comprised eight plenary and twenty-two restricted sessions. Quite separate were the Franco-Viet Minh military command conferences held after June 2, and the Viet Minh military staff talks with Laotian and Cambodian representatives that began in late June. Finally, during the latter half of the conference, French and Viet Minh delegation heads met secretly in so-called "underground" negotiations, the results of which were closely held, at least by the French.

Chou En-lai, China's foreign minister and chief delegate, indicated to Eden that Viet Minh forces would be withdrawn from Cambodia and Laos, was the debate resolved and the way opened for serious efforts to bring about cease-fires throughout Indochina.

The time-consuming exchanges over the authenticity of Communist "resistance forces" in Laos and Cambodia were, interestingly enough, not duplicated when it came to determining the status of the DRV. The Berlin Conference final communiqué had specified that the Indochina deliberations would be attended by the United States, Great Britain, Communist China, the Soviet Union, France, "and other states concerned." Invitations to the participants, it was further agreed, would be issued only by the Berlin conferees, i.e., by the Big Four but not by Peking. Yet, as Molotov admitted at the first plenary session (May 8), Peking as well as Moscow invited the DRV. The Chinese action was vigorously assailed by France and the United States. No attempt was made, however, to block the DRV's participation. Despite the antagonism of the Vietnamese government nominally headed by Bao Dai, the DRV was generally considered one of the principal combatants, so that its consent to a cease-fire was indispensable and required its participation. Moreover, the Soviet Union indicated to the French that it would not accept the presence of delegates from the Associated States of Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) unless the DRV was admitted to the conference. By the time of Dienbienphu's fall (May 7), all parties were agreed that there would be nine delegations discussing Indochina. On May 8 the first session got under way.

2. THE COMMUNICATION GAPS

About every other day, nine delegations sat at a round table to exchange views, but true bargaining was not taking place. Proposals were tabled and debated, of course, but actual give-and-take was reserved for private discussions, usually in the absence of the pro-Western Indochinese parties. In spite of the absence of these parties, the Geneva talks on Indochina were hardly dominated by big-power cabals. Political and ideological differences were so intense, particularly between the American and Chinese representatives, that diplomacy had to be conducted circuitously, with Eden and Molotov frequently acting as mediators and messengers for delegates unwilling to be found together.

Anthony Eden, whose persistence in the face of adversity throughout the conference was rewarded in the end, later provided this description of personal tribulation:

I was conscious that time was not on our side. Since neither the Americans nor the French had established any contacts with the Communist representatives [in mid-June], I had been compelled to adopt the role of intermediary between the Western powers and the Communists. My activities in this respect were open to every kind of misrepresentation. I was concerned about their effect on Anglo-American relations. On the other hand, I was encouraged by the close accord maintained throughout the Conference between ourselves and the other members of the Commonwealth, including those, like Mr. Nehru, who were not represented at Geneva. They sent me messages of thanks and encouragement. I needed them, for I began to feel that we should never make effective headway. I had never known a conference of this kind. The parties would not make direct contact and we

were in constant danger of one or another backing out of the door.

Not until the latter half of June did high-ranking French and Viet Minh delegates meet face to face, Viet Minh military officials confer with Cambodian and Laotian representatives, or French and Chinese heads of delegation privately exchange views. Communist and non-Communist Vietnamese, meanwhile, refused to talk to one another until July, when finally Tran Van Do and Pham Van Dong were persuaded to have private discussions. Most important, the American delegation (USDEL), under strict instructions to avoid contact with the Chinese, had to rely on second-hand information provided by the British, French, and Soviet representatives, a procedure that was repeated with respect to the Viet Minh.

The problem of contact acutely affected the position of the State of Vietnam. Although legally an independent state by virtue of treaties with France formally approved June 4, Vietnam did not have the power to negotiate its own fate. The French, clearly anxious lest the Vietnamese upset the delicate private talks with the Viet Minh, avoided Bao Dai's representatives whenever possible and sought to exploit close Vietnamese-American relations by informing the Vietnamese of agreements already reached. The American delegation, however, rebuffed French diplomats who tried to have it explain to the Vietnamese why a partition solution, such as Paris found appealing later in the conference, should be accepted or at least not opposed. By refusing to act as intermediaries for the French, the delegation correctly avoided being associated in Vietnamese eyes with any

"French solution" to the war. At the same time, the Vietnamese were kept in the dark about such vital developments as a territorial division of the country. For this and other reasons, the Vietnamese became hostile to and finally dissociated themselves from the final terms.

The American delegation also suffered from incomplete information. In part, this was because the French sometimes failed to provide all the news they possessed (or so it was believed). But the ambiguity of the USDEL's aims was equally responsible. On the one hand, the Americans wanted to use their influence to ensure that the French did not sell out Western interests for the sake of a quick settlement; on the other, they were determined not to become so involved in the bargaining process as to link the Administration to the final terms. Dulles tried to resolve these apparently conflicting aims at a background news briefing. The United States, he said, "would be inclined not to try to interpose [its] veto in any sense as against what they [the French and Vietnamese] might want to do"; but if a solution were adopted that ran contrary to American interests, the United States would either seek to prevent it or, failing that, "would probably want to disassociate [itself] from [the final settlement]." The difficulty of this position was that the French did not keep their American colleagues so well informed of developments in the talks with the Viet Minh as to provide the United States with a basis for "disassociation." Throughout the conference, in fact, the French aimed at exploiting the American presence for the strength they believed it provided their negotiators, and this tactic meant

pressuring Washington to retain a high-ranking delegation at the conference right up to the moment of the settlement.

Thus far we have been dealing with diplomacy as it was conducted by the non-Communist delegations. What of the Communists? The available documentation permits some few remarks, definite or speculative. First, the Chinese, Soviet, and Viet Minh delegations were in constant touch, as reported by their news agencies. Moreover, during the conference Chou En-lai was able to make three stopovers in Moscow that probably facilitated Sino-Soviet collaboration. In early July, during a recess for heads of delegation, Chou and Ho Chi Minh held a three-day meeting that may account for the Viet Minh's more conciliatory attitude thereafter. In brief, the Communists apparently were not plagued by the kinds of communication problems that hampered the Americans, British, and Vietnamese.

As will be argued in greater detail below, the seeming continuity of contact among the Communist delegations did not result in a uniformity of views. The Chinese and Soviets evidently worked independent of the Viet Minh whenever their separate interests called for swifter progress in the negotiations. When the Viet Minh were intransigent Chou and Molotov frequently took the initiative to break log jams that threatened to plunge the conference into permanent deadlock. Much like Eden, Chou and Molotov sometimes acted as mediators. These two, particularly Chou, relished this role for what F. C. Iklé has called the "side-effects" of negotiations -- benefits extracted from, but incidental to, negotiations, such as enhanced prestige. In the end, the Viet Minh advantage

of close rapport with Moscow and Peking did not prevent the Viet Minh from sharing with their non-Communist compatriots the ignominious distinction of having been undercut by their allies.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF BARGAINING POSITIONS

1. THE UNITED STATES AND THE NEGOTIATIONS

The United States, by underwriting the Navarre Plan and using great caution in getting France to improve its relationship with the non-Communist Vietnamese nationalists, hoped to influence Paris to postpone a commitment to negotiations until French forces were at least on the threshold of military victory. The United States, aware of the strong pressures on the Laniel government from the National Assembly and the French public for a peaceful settlement, and clearly influenced by the experience at Panmunjom, sought to persuade the premier against translating public statements on the desirability of peace into a decision to sit down at the bargaining table. Late in 1953 Laniel agreed that Washington's aversion to premature negotiations was well-advised; but at Berlin his government joined with the Soviet Union in calling for an international conference to end the Indochina conflict. The French government found it could no longer ignore anti-war sentiment at home without jeopardizing its survival, while the Americans, however strongly opposed to a conference with victory nowhere in sight and to dealing with Communist China, felt compelled to approve the Berlin decision if only to blunt the French threat of scuttling EDC.

Forced to go along with the French preference for negotiating with the Communists, the United States remained unalterably pessimistic about the probable results. In March 1954, for example, the Joint Chiefs of

Staff examined the various alternatives to military victory -- a cease-fire prior to a political settlement, a coalition government, and partition -- and found them all leading inevitably to Communist control of Indochina. As for national elections in Vietnam, a difficult problem, the Chiefs considered a Communist victory certain because of Communist territorial control, popular support, and superior tactics. Their views, approved by Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, accurately reflected a government policy based squarely on the idea that the only alternative to a French military victory was a Franco-Vietnamese surrender under the guise of a negotiated settlement.

Having obtained assurances from the French government that its forces would not cease fire prior to the conference, Washington, in late April and early May, sought to develop guidelines for the American delegation. In the deliberations that ensued, it was decided that the Administration had to be certain the French were not preparing to negotiate the surrender of Indochina. Unprecedented proposals -- including the suspension of aid to France -- were made to the President in an effort to prevent France's bargaining for a face-saving withdrawal. When the French informed Washington during the first week of May of the proposals they intended to make in the opening round of the Geneva talks, among which was an internationally supervised cease-fire followed by political discussions leading to free elections, the Administration's pessimism deepened. The Communists, it was argued, would never agree to meaningful supervision of the armistice, and in fact would use the opportunity to

better their military position. The strong feeling of the Government was that the French would either rapidly capitulate in the wake of a cease-fire or would yield to the Communists' terms in the course of protracted political debate. The President was therefore urged not to associate the United States with any cease-fire in advance of a satisfactory political settlement. Eisenhower agreed completely with this advice. In the instructions sent to USDEL, it was formally stated that the United States could only support negotiations for a controlled armistice arrangement, continued Franco-Vietnamese military action during negotiations, and the maintenance of the American aid program on condition that broader efforts were made to organize a regional defense alignment against the Communist threat to Southeast Asia.

2. THE COMMUNIST PROPOSALS

Official American perspectives on the likely pattern of the Geneva negotiations were confirmed when the Viet Minh brought forward their first proposal "package" at the second plenary session on May 10. Pham Van Dong, then the DRV's vice-minister for foreign affairs and already a seasoned negotiator with the French, recommended that a political settlement precede a military agreement to cease fire, rather than the reverse procedure which the French preferred. Oddly enough, therefore, the Viet Minh position was in line with the American preference for priority to a political settlement. But the Viet Minh in effect proposed to stop fighting only when French troops had left Vietnam and a political process favorable to the Communists had been set in motion. Once the French could

be persuaded to withdraw, the VNA would undoubtedly collapse under Viet Minh military pressure. Moreover, inasmuch as Dong's plan made no allowance for the disarming, much less the regrouping, of indigenous forces on either side, the Viet Minh would be militarily prepared to control any general election that might be held. Dong's proposal, then, amounted to a request that the French abandon Vietnam to a certain fate.

In the same speech Dong made clear that the DRV's concern extended beyond Vietnam to Cambodia and Laos. By 1954, Viet Minh coordination with the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer "resistance forces" had been going on at least since the formal announcement on March 11, 1951, of the formation of a Viet Minh/Free Khmer/Pathet Lao "National United Front." In advising France to recognize the "sovereignty and independence" of these movements as well as of the DRV, in calling for the withdrawal of French forces from Cambodia and Laos, and in offering the same unsupervised election procedure for Cambodia and Laos as for Vietnam, Dong revealed that he spoke on behalf not so much of the unrepresented Communist front organizations as of Viet Minh interests in the neighboring kingdoms. The inclusion of the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer in the DRV's settlement plan quickly brought the conference to a standstill and, much later, compelled the Soviets and Chinese to restrain Viet Minh ambitions.

3. THE AMERICAN REACTION

From the American standpoint, Dong's proposals met none of the criteria of acceptability discussed in Washington earlier in the month. Moreover, the French

proposals also fell short of the mark. As Smith indicated at the second and third plenary sessions (May 10 and May 12), the United States could not commit itself in advance to a guarantee of the settlement, despite Bidault's call for all the participants to give such a guarantee. National elections in Vietnam would have to be supervised by an international commission "under United Nations auspices." Both these points were to remain cardinal elements of American policy throughout the negotiations despite French (and Communist) efforts to have them altered.

Pessimism over Communist intentions and disagreement with important aspects of the French proposals were intimately connected with events on the battlefield. After the debacle at Dienbienphu, the French gradually shifted their forces from Laos and Cambodia into the Tonkin Delta. They left behind weak Laotian and Cambodian national armies to cope with veteran Viet Minh battalions. Viet Minh strength was so great that Giap's armies were able to follow the retreating French as well as to retain in Laos and Cambodia forces sufficient to threaten the political no less than the military stability of the royal governments. During late May and early June, therefore, high-ranking French military authorities admitted that the situation in the Delta, even with a strong French fall-back position established around the Hanoi-Haiphong axis, was dangerous.

Because of these developments, the conviction was reinforced in Washington that the Communists, while making proposals at Geneva they knew would be unacceptable to the West, would drive hard for important battlefield

gains. Thus they might hope to demoralize French Union troops, set the stage for their withdrawal southward, and perhaps even precipitate a general crisis of confidence in Indochina and a Viet Minh takeover by default.

Washington concluded, not that the goals set by the Administration for a settlement were unrealistic, but that the only way to attain them was through decisive military victory in conformity with the original united action proposal of March 29. The United States, therefore, did not merely maintain its delegation at Geneva throughout the indecisive sessions of May and June, but once again alerted France to the possibility of a military alternative to defeat under the pressure of Communist talk-fight tactics.

IV. THE UNITED STATES AT GENEVA: FORCE AND
DIPLOMACY, MAY TO MID-JUNE

In keeping open the option of united action, the Administration, no less during May and the first half of June than in April, carefully made direct U.S. involvement conditional on a range of French concessions and promises. This second trial of the united-action formula was not designed to make further negotiations at Geneva impossible; rather, it was intended to provide an alternative to which the French might turn once they, and hopefully the British as well, conceded that negotiations were a wasteful exercise.

The issue of united action arose again in early May when Premier Laniel, predicting that in the absence of active American military cooperation the security of the whole Tonkin Delta would be endangered, pressed for a new American commitment. Washington replied with a series of "indispensable" conditions for American involvement. When Paris had met these, further U.S.-French consultations would take place. The conditions were:

(1) formal requests for American involvement from France and the Associated States;

(2) an immediate, favorable reaction to those requests from Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as the assurance of British participation or acquiescence;

(3) presentation of the circumstances of U.S. involvement to the UN by one of the concerned Asian states;

(4) a French guarantee of complete independence to the Associated States, and of their option to withdraw from the French Union at any time;

(5) a French undertaking not to withdraw the Expeditionary Corps from Indochina during the period of united action (to ensure that the United States would provide only air and sea support, not combat troops);

(6) Franco-American agreement on the training of native forces and a new command structure during united action;

(7) full endorsement by the French cabinet and Assembly of these conditions (to ensure a firm French commitment even in the event of a change of government in Paris).

The American response to Laniel's inquiry set the stage for an extended series of discussions over the ensuing five weeks between the French government and the Department of State. In the course of them, several major obstacles to agreement emerged: American insistence on the right of the Associated States to withdraw from the French Union; American reluctance to commit more than air and naval support; French demands for an advance assurance from Washington of prompt aerial intervention in the event of a Chinese Communist air attack on French forces in the Tonkin Delta. Although the State Department was ordered to begin contingency planning for intervention, there was little hope that these differences between the two allies could be removed.

Illustrative of the depth of the disagreement was the controversy over France's desire for a guarantee

of American interdiction in case of a Chinese air attack in the Delta. The French argued that such an attack, unlike Chinese assistance to the Viet Minh, should prompt an instantaneous American response contingent only upon Congressional authorization, and not upon the seven conditions presented to Laniel. Washington's retort was that Chinese air intervention was extremely unlikely, that the seven conditions did in fact apply to that contingency, and that the United States would in any case make no unilateral commitment even against overt, unprovoked Chinese aggression without firm, broad allied support.

By early June, the unsettled issues separating the United States from France began to lose their relevance to the war. The State Department had slowly come to the conclusion that the military picture in Vietnam was so bleak that measures then under consideration, such as an American takeover of the training of the VNA, were no longer meaningful. Although the military situation was not judged irretrievable, Washington now felt that circumstances had altered so radically since united action was first proposed that this policy might have to be withdrawn as one of the alternatives open to French consideration. Since this feeling arose at a time when little substantive progress had been made at Geneva, the Administration saw itself with no alternative but to prepare for a collective defense organization after Geneva, with British participation. Inasmuch as Eden had intimated to Smith his pessimism over the prospects for a settlement, the Administration hoped that Great Britain was finally prepared to admit the accuracy of our

American predictions regarding the negotiations and to join with Washington in examining the overall security situation in Southeast Asia.

The Administration had come to recognize that the French, for all their avowed interest in active American participation in the war, still hoped to end the conflict through negotiations. What they wanted above all was not the military advantages of American involvement but the political benefits that might be derived from bringing into the open the fact that the two allies were negotiating intervention. Dulles therefore put a limit to the French option on united action; he correctly judged that, if the French were to have united action indefinitely available to them, the United States might get trapped into a commitment to fight under highly adverse military circumstances. By phasing out the united action alternative, the Administration revealed an ability to project ahead that had been basically absent from diplomacy prior to the fall of Dienbienphu. As distasteful as the negotiations at Geneva might be, it was decided, the best course lay in attempting to secure the most satisfactory terms while simultaneously shifting military planning to the future possibilities for regional collective defense.

V. THE MAJOR ISSUES AT THE CONFERENCE, MAY-JUNE

Following the initial French and Viet Minh proposals of May 8 and 10, respectively, the Geneva conferees had in fact made some progress, although certainly not of an order that could have led any of the chief negotiators to expect a quick settlement. Three major areas of contention emerged: the separation of belligerent forces, the establishment of a framework for political settlements in the three Indochinese states, and provision for effective control and supervision of the cease-fire.

1. SEPARATION OF THE BELLIGERENTS

For different reasons, the French and Viet Minh negotiators at first agreed that the opposing armies should be regrouped in several concentration points rather than in a single area. The first crucial question tackled was whether a cease-fire should follow success in the regroupment process or, as Pham Van Dong proposed, an overall political settlement. When the conference moved from plenary to restricted session in mid-May, Molotov acceded to France's insistence that the military problem be dealt with separately before going on, as Dong demanded, to consideration of the interrelated political problems. The way was therefore left open for discussions on how regroupment and the disarming of forces might take place.

At the sixth restricted session (May 25), Pham Van Dong suddenly reversed his position by proposing what amounted to the partitioning of Indochina. He suggested that, in the course of regroupment, specific territorial

jurisdictions be established and that each side have complete economic, administrative, and military control within its zone. Dong further called for a temporary line of demarcation that would be topographically suitable for transportation and communication within each zone. The available evidence to explain Dong's shift, while circumstantial, suggests that it stemmed from a conviction in the Soviet camp, probably supported by the Chinese, that since the West would violently oppose a coalition-type settlement, partition would satisfy Chinese security needs. The partition solution was therefore considered by the Soviets a satisfactory alternative to cease-fire proposals that the West was showing no disposition to accept.

USDEL blanched at Dong's proposal. But the French, despite several official promises to the Saigon government not to accept partition, began to have second thoughts after the new government of Pierre Mendès-France took over in mid-June. Mendès-France, more attuned than Laniel to public sentiment in his country, quickly foresaw that agreement with the Viet Minh was unlikely unless he accepted partition. In late June, therefore, his administration revised France's negotiating position to encompass the regroupment of opposing forces on either side of a line about at the 18th parallel. London and Washington were duly notified of this shift, but not Saigon.

2. POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS

As the Chinese and Soviet negotiators retreated somewhat on the order of military and political settlements,

they also made concessions on political solutions for Cambodia and Laos. Chou En-lai took the lead by telling Eden, in mid-June, that a political settlement could easily be accomplished in Cambodia, where the Free Khmer forces were small, and that in Laos, where Communist forces were larger, their regroupment in two provinces bordering on Vietnam (Sam Neua and Phong Saly), coupled with the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Laos, would facilitate a solution to which the Viet Minh could agree. The Chinese, with evident Soviet backing, had apparently sought to break the ice so as to prevent the conference from adjourning indefinitely. In doing so, they were clearly motivated by a desire to gain from the conference greater security benefits for the CPR. To judge from DRV broadcasts at the time, the Viet Minh took exception to Sino-Soviet concessions on separate political settlements for Laos and Cambodia. Both major Communist powers apparently gave priority to their own interests rather than the DRV's.

3. CONTROL AND SUPERVISION

Devising supervisory organs to oversee the implementation and preservation of the cease-fire was slow work. Disagreement ranged over three separate but interrelated issues: the structure of the supervisory organ -- whether it should consist solely of joint commissions composed of the belligerents, or should have superimposed above an international authority; the composition of the supervisory organ; and the procedures under which the control body would discharge its functions.

On the first matter, Molotov moved away from Dong's original proposal for joint indigenous commissions by suggesting the setting up of a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) similar to the one established in Korea. Molotov rejected United Nations involvement and shied away from the Western proposal to make the joint commissions subordinate to the neutral commission. The NNSC, he said, should be able to reach agreement on "important" questions raised by the commissions; if not, disputes could be referred to the states guaranteeing the settlement which, if necessary, would take "collective measures" to resolve the disputes.

Molotov's proposals ran counter to those advanced by Bidault, who favored a neutral control commission that would have sole responsibility for the armistice and would have absolute authority over the joint commissions. Eden subsequently suggested that the Colombo Powers (India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, and Indonesia), being five in number and all truly neutral, should satisfy the conferees' desire for an impartial membership that could not be obstructed in its work by a split vote. The positions of the two sides on control and supervision were obviously remote from one another. But even as the West accused the Communists of not knowing the meaning of neutrality, and the Communists retorted that an NNSC in Indochina was the only appropriate control body, the area of the Geneva debate had narrowed considerably. Compromise did not seem out of reach, particularly on the question of membership on the neutral control commission.

VI. THE ANGLO-AMERICAN RAPPROCHEMENT

On June 19 the Korea phase of the conference recessed without a political settlement. With the adjournment, several of the chief delegates returned home, including Eden, who joined Prime Minister Churchill for a flight to Washington to confer with American officials on collective defense in Southeast Asia. By this time, as we noted above, the United States had come to believe that, if the French could be persuaded to toughen their stand, a settlement might be achieved acceptable to Washington though insufficient to command the latter's active support. Should the Communists stiffen in response to French firmness, the way would be opened for the allies to consult on their next moves. Clearly this policy required British adherence, for if Eden and Churchill could be persuaded to commit London to a regional defense arrangement, France's negotiating position would be strengthened.

The British opposed agreeing in advance to military measures that would follow a breakdown in the Geneva talks, but went along with Washington's view that some kind of open-ended warning to the Communists might encourage them to bargain more sincerely. The French government concurred by urging a joint Anglo-American declaration that would seek to enjoin the Communists from continuing their military push while negotiations wore on without progress. On June 29, Eisenhower and Churchill issued a statement that "if at Geneva the French Government is confronted with demands which prevent an acceptable agreement regarding Indochina, the international situation will be seriously aggravated." In retrospect, the statement may have had

an important bearing on the Communists' negotiating position -- a point to which we shall return later.

The ramifications of "an acceptable agreement" constituted the main subject of the U.S.-UK talks. The two governments concurred on a common set of principles which, if worked into the settlement terms, would enable both at least to "respect" the armistice. These principles, known as the Seven Points, were communicated to the French. In them, the United States accepted a territorial division of Vietnam (at a line about midway between the 17th and 18th parallels) on condition that the desirability of the country's ultimate reunification was recognized. This last point, embracing the question of national elections, seemed to the French to contradict another point that insisted on no "political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control." Dulles, in a significant explanation, said that the two points were not in conflict, for an agreement might be reached at Geneva that could not prevent the Communists from eventually taking over all Indochina. What was therefore necessary, the Secretary indicated, was to arrange elections in a way that would give the South Vietnamese a liberal breathing spell, during which, it was hoped, they would be able to coalesce their strength for a future national referendum.

Although the United States and Great Britain had at last found common ground on Indochina, Washington remained highly pessimistic about either Britain's or France's willingness, when the chips were down, to stick by the Seven Points. The Administration was almost convinced,

and so informed Eden, that it could not guarantee the final settlement even if the latter proved to be in line with the Seven Points. What bothered Washington was that the British looked upon the Seven Points, not as a realistic basis for a firm stand with the French, but as an optimum solution that would eventually have to be pared down once the going became difficult. For the Administration, then, the chief gain from the conversations with Eden and Churchill was that its position on the negotiations at Geneva had been made clear to our main allies well in advance of the final settlement.

VII. TOWARD A SETTLEMENT: THE LAST THIRTY DAYS

1. THE BARGAINING CONTINUES

While the French and British pondered the implications of the Seven Points, bargaining continued behind the scenes against a background of further military advances by the Viet Minh. As Viet Minh strength increased in the Delta and seemed to be building up also in southern Annam, their bargaining position hardened. They responded to the French proposal for a territorial division of Vietnam at the 18th parallel by offering a line in southern Annam running northwest from the 13th to the 14th parallel, i.e., from Tuy Hoa on the coast through Pleiku to the Cambodian border. In contrast to the French, who demanded a four-month interval between cease-fire and withdrawal of forces, the Viet Minh demanded two months. In Laos, the Viet Minh claimed their troops had already withdrawn, though some 15,000 still remained. In sharp contrast, then, to the words of Chou En-lai, who told Mendès-France at this time (late June) that a cease-fire was within reach and that the resistance elements in Laos and Cambodia should be dealt with by the royal governments, the Viet Minh were not then prepared to yield their stranglehold on any of the three Indochinese states.

On other questions, however, the outlines of compromise began to take form. The French retreated from their insistence on setting no date for national elections; they offered to hold them eighteen months after completion of regroupment. The Viet Minh, however, clung to a six-month interval after the cease-fire. Pham Van Dong agreed with

his French counterpart that, in order to avoid the possibility of Vietnamese interference in completion of the settlement, the military commands of the two sides rather than the governments should sign the final armistice. As for the problems of control and supervision, the Communists, in early July, conceded that an odd-numbered neutral commission chaired by India and with equal pro-Communist and pro-Western representation would be workable. Questions of the commission's authority and reporting procedures remained. The important point is, however, that the Communist side had demonstrated its desire for broad agreement.

2. CHINESE DIPLOMACY

Returning to Peking at the recess, Chou En-lai broadened Communist China's effort, begun in late 1952, to woo its neighbors with talk of peaceful coexistence. Chou returned to the site of his first triumph in gaining Asian support for the "five principles" of peaceful coexistence when he met again in New Delhi with Nehru on June 28. There, and later in Rangoon with Burmese Prime Minister U Nu, Chou voiced hopes for continued friendly relations, for an early end to the fighting in Indochina, and for the independent national development of all countries regardless of their social systems. By contrasting this policy of tolerance with the American "policy of strength," the CPR clearly hoped to gain Asian recognition of China as the leading power in the region in the fight against "imperialism" and "colonialism."

The advancement of Chinese interests through diplomacy may also have been the basis for Chou's meeting with Ho Chi Minh at Nanning on July 3-5. Observers in Hong Kong at the time thought Chou had cautioned Ho against destroying chances for an armistice by ordering an intensification of Viet Minh military activities. Chou obviously would not have wanted the conference to break up, for that outcome not only would have risked a wider war but also would have undermined the gains he had made through diplomacy before and during the negotiations. The DRV's overt reaction to the talks -- stressing, in a Nhan Dan article, President Ho's teaching that both the diplomatic and military struggles need to be long and hard -- seemed to indicate dislike for Chou's suggestions. At Geneva, however, Chinese delegates indicated that the Chou-Ho meeting would benefit the French, and thus seemed to suggest that Ho had decided to bow before Chinese demands.

3. THE FRANCO-AMERICAN UNDERSTANDING

Before the effect of Chou's meeting with Ho was clear to the French, they engaged in intensive conversations with the Americans to convince them that the attainment of a settlement in line with the Seven Points required the return of a high-level American representative to Geneva. Mendès-France, to prove his willingness to stand fast with such an American delegate behind him, promised to send conscripts to Indochina if a cease-fire were not agreed to by July 20. Dulles, however, was extremely doubtful that Mendès-France meant what he said in promising

to adhere strictly to the Seven Points. Indeed, the Secretary refused to send Smith back or to return in person to Geneva, for he believed that, should France find it necessary thereafter to settle for less than the Seven Points, the United States would have to dissociate itself from the final agreement in a way that would severely damage Franco-American relations.

Following exchanges of personal messages between Mendès-France and Dulles, the Secretary was apparently sufficiently persuaded of the genuineness of the Premier's convictions to fly to Paris. There, on July 14, the two officials signed a memorandum which duplicated that agreed to by the United States and Great Britain. A position paper was also drawn up to make clear anew that the United States was not a primary party to the negotiations, would neither be asked nor expected to accept a settlement that differed markedly from the Seven Points, and might, by a unilateral or multilateral statement, publicly dissociate itself from the final terms. It was agreed that after a settlement work toward a collective defense organization for Southeast Asia would proceed. If no agreement were reached, joint consultations would take place and the United States might bring the war before the United Nations. But Mendès-France had still received no assurance from Dulles that he intended to bolster the American delegation. Not until Dulles's return to Washington (perhaps on the President's personal intervention) was Mendès-France notified of Smith's imminent return.

4. THE FINAL WEEK OF BARGAINING

At Geneva, the Chinese continued to evince their sincere interest in reaching agreement. Chou commented to Mendès-France on July 13 that the French and Viet Minh had to make concessions on the demarcation problem, but that this did not mean equal sacrifices by both sides. The same day, the Viet Minh told the French they were willing to settle on the 16th parallel. On Laos and Cambodia, however, concessions by the Communist side were evidently not in order. The main reason was that the Chinese remained anxious lest a settlement find both those countries legally capable of acquiring American military aid and forces, and of permitting the establishment of American bases. The Chinese were not concerned about French military personnel on station there, but, for their own security they had to be certain the United States was not planning a new Indochinese alliance.

The Cambodians stubbornly insisted that their country's self-defense not be compromised by the settlement. The United States encouraged them to the point of indicating to a ranking Cambodian official that Cambodia might participate in the collective security arrangement then under consideration by the United States and Great Britain. The Laotians, too, were interested in obtaining whatever protection the new defense arrangements would afford. As they indicated to USDEL, they were concerned lest the French throw Laotian defense to the winds in their quest for a settlement.

During this period, the Chinese were concerned about the slow progress toward a settlement. From the private

and public record, it appears Peking was far from convinced that continued discussions on the restoration of peace in Indochina would remove the possibility of dramatic new military moves by the United States. Second, the return of Smith (July 16) was interpreted by the Chinese to mean that Mendès-France had raised the price for a settlement at American instigation. France, with an honorable way out of the war within easy reach, was said to be succumbing to American pressure to resist a compromise solution in favor of a Southeast Asia military coalition. Not that the Chinese were ready to compromise their own vital interests in Laos and Cambodia. Chou, in conversation with Laotian and Cambodian delegates, was determined not so much to ensure a continued Viet Minh presence in those countries as to guard against future defense ties between the royal governments and Washington. Chou was even prepared to give direct warning of serious consequences should U.S. war materiel, bases, or forces be introduced into Cambodia and Laos. Whether the Chinese seriously believed that Laos and Cambodia could be kept out of the Southeast Asia pact is at best debatable. There seems little doubt, however, that Peking considered the written prohibition, later introduced into the accords, against Indochinese alliances or foreign bases as a major step toward the neutralization of Southeast Asia and the area's eventual dissociation from the American defense system.

5. AGREEMENT

Between July 18 and 21, the conferees were able to iron out their differences sufficiently to produce three military agreements and a Final Declaration now commonly referred to as the Geneva "accords."

On Vietnam, the drawing of the demarcation line at roughly the 17th parallel was apparently the work of Molotov who, in retreating from the last-minute Viet Minh compromise offer of the 16th parallel, may have simply traded a DRV territorial loss for a specific election date, which all the Communist delegates at the conference wanted. French willingness to settle on the 17th parallel stemmed from the advice of General Ely, who told Mendès-France that such a line would preserve for France the cities of Hue and Tourane (Da Nang) and would provide Laos with a direct route to the sea (Route 9). Perhaps in return for these gains, France agreed that national elections be held two years from the date of the cease-fire. In the interim, as stated in the Final Declaration, the demarcation line was to be "provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary." French forces were to be withdrawn from northern Vietnam in stages over 300 days, a lengthy period in keeping with French demands.

The membership and power of the International Control Commission were at last defined. Apparently through Chou En-lai's efforts, agreement was reached that India, Poland, and Canada should be the member states of the ICC. The Commission was empowered to form fixed and mobile inspection teams and to have full freedom of movement in both zones

of Vietnam. Its relation to the Joint Commission was less clearly established. The ICC's supremacy was tacitly admitted, as the French had demanded. But in granting it the power of recommendation, the conferees distinguished between majority and unanimous voting in making recommendations. The rule of unanimity was to apply to "questions concerning violations, or threats of violations, which might lead to a resumption of hostilities"; majority rule, which the West preferred, would only apply to those less volatile questions that would not be considered threats to the peace.

Cease-fires in Laos and Cambodia occurred simultaneously with that in Vietnam. In all other respects, however, the two royal governments had their way. In both countries, French training instructors were permitted to remain (along with two French treaty bases in Laos); in separate declarations, both governments made clear that their abstention from alliances and foreign military bases depended upon the absence of threats to their security. As for the dissident forces on their territories, the military agreement on Laos provided for the temporary regroupment of Pathet Lao units in the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua prior to their withdrawal. Those insurgents who wished to remain in Laos were promised the right of participation in elections scheduled for September 1955. In Cambodia, non-native Free Khmer troops were to leave the country within ninety days of the cease-fire; as in Laos, election privileges were granted those insurgents who would be demobilized.

6. DISSENTING VIEWS: THE AMERICAN AND VIETNAMESE
POSITIONS

As had long been intended, General Smith, at the final plenary session of July 21, issued a unilateral statement of the American position. The fact that his statement indicated agreement not merely to respect the final terms, but also to take note of them and the political statements that comprised the first twelve paragraphs of the Final Declaration, was due to a last-minute appeal from Mendès-France that Smith approvingly passed on to Dulles.

Smith's caution in the statement against "any renewal of aggression" deserves additional comment inasmuch as it was cited by President Kennedy (in a letter to President Ngo Dinh Diem on December 14, 1961) as the basis for the American commitment to South Vietnam's defense. Viewed in the context of the Conference, the statement does not seem to have been intended as an open-ended American commitment against possible aggression from the North. Rather, the Administration apparently intended the statement as a warning to the Viet Minh: should they, within the two-year interval before general elections, "renew" what Washington and Saigon had regarded since 1946 as their "aggression," the United States would be gravely concerned. Smith's statement, in short, seems to have been limited to the period July 1954 to July 1956.

The Vietnamese delegation refused to accept a divided country and, when finally informed of Franco-Viet Minh agreement on a demarcation line, strongly protested that Paris had sold out the Vietnamese people.

Saigon argued, it now seems quite reasonably, that partition would be a merely temporary state pending the renewal of fighting. The Vietnamese could hardly have been expected to approve the formal partition of July 21. Inasmuch as the military agreements, by prearrangement, were signed by French and Viet Minh commanders to avoid seeking Vietnamese consent, Saigon could do no more than protest at the final session. The act of protest was significant, however, for by it the Vietnamese were contending that France's bypassing of the Bao Dai government only made the settlement possible, not legal. Like Washington, therefore, Saigon refused to adhere to the Final Declaration and was not a signatory to the military accord that divided the country.

VIII. THE MEANING OF GENEVA

Much of the controversy surrounding the American involvement in Vietnam relates to the post-Geneva period, in particular to the two-year interval before national elections were to bring about Vietnam's reunification. To address the question whether the United States instigated collusion with the Government of Vietnam to defy the Final Declaration's stipulation about national elections would broaden this study beyond its intended scope. What is relevant, however, are the documented or deduced expectations and objectives of the major participants concerning Vietnam, as well as Cambodia and Laos, at the time the conference closed. How had the accords meshed with the aims of the participants, and to what extent were objectives intertwined with, or perhaps divorced from, expectations? To anticipate, the present argumentation over the failure to hold elections in July 1956 overlooks their relative unimportance, for a variety of reasons, to the five major powers at the Geneva Conference; their objectives only secondarily took into account the expectations of the Vietnamese, North and South.

An assessment of the hopes and goals of the Geneva conferees in the immediate aftermath of the conference should be differentiated from the practical effect of the accords they drew up. A distinction, not often made yet highly important to an understanding of the conference and its achievements, is that between the intent of the parties regarding Vietnam and the seemingly contradictory consequences of their agreement.

1. THE PRACTICAL NATURE OF THE ACCORDS

With the exception of South Vietnam, every nation represented at the conference came to believe that partition was the only way to separate the combatants, settle the widely disparate military and political demands of the French and Viet Minh, and conclude an armistice. It might further be argued (although the evidence available does not permit a definitive statement) that these eight delegations intended the partition line to be temporary inasmuch as they all desired Vietnamese elections in 1956. But what needs to be pointed out is that the very nature of the accords did not favor unification. By creating two regimes responsible for "civil administration" (article 14a of the Vietnam armistice agreement), by providing for the regroupment of forces to two zones and for the movement of persons to the zone of their choice, and by putting off national elections for two years, the conferees had made a future political settlement for Vietnam extremely unlikely. Certainly, the division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel was designed to facilitate the armistice, not to create political subdivisions; but its unintended effect was to allow time for the development of two governments, headed by totally divergent personalities and committed to antithetical political philosophies, foreign policies, and socio-economic systems. Consequently, the call for elections in the Final Declaration had as little chance of implementation in Vietnam as previously in Korea and Germany, a point brought home by Vietnamese officials and reinforced by the failure of the same Geneva conferees to agree on a political settlement in

Korea. "Elections," Victor Bator has commented, "can, indeed, decide secondary problems of coexistence in circumstances where some measurable minimum basis for political agreement exists. But they are incapable of acceptance by two opposing states, or parts of a state, when diametrically opposite philosophies are involved." If the intent of the Geneva accords was subverted, the subverters were the conferees themselves, who aspired to an ideal political settlement incompatible with the physical and psychological dismemberment of Vietnam on July 21, 1954.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PARTICIPANTS: THE COMMUNIST SIDE

Whether or not one accepts the view offered here that the central political provision of the Final Declaration was decisively undercut by provisions of the military accords and the Declaration itself, an examination of the objectives of the Soviet Union and Communist China suggests the degree of importance they, as distinct from the DRV, attached to Vietnamese unity. For it is the conclusion here that Vietnamese unity, whether achieved by free elections or the disintegration of South Vietnam, was not a priority objective of Moscow or Peking even though both powers may well have expected a unified Communist Vietnam by July 1956. If this is so, we may ask, what were the primary aims of Moscow and Peking in supporting a settlement? Why did the Communists apparently strive for a settlement, and why did Molotov in particular, who was not personally identified in Western eyes at the

time as a vigorous proponent of détente, play such a key role in keeping the conference from the brink of failure?

Although it would appear that, on the major issues at least, the Soviet Union coordinated its actions with Communist China, the two Communist powers were clearly pursuing separate national interests in working toward a settlement of the war. The reconciliation of those interests seems to have been achieved, not so much through Soviet ability (which did exist) to compel Chinese acquiescence as through a common desire for a settlement.

Soviet Objectives at the Conference

In retrospect, the Soviet Union seems to have had four major objectives at the conference: (1) to avert a major war crisis over Indochina that would cement Western unity, enable the United States to gain support it previously lacked for "united action," and conceivably force Moscow into a commitment to defend the Chinese; (2) to reduce the prospects for successful passage of EDC in the French National Assembly; (3) to heighten the prestige of the Soviet Union as a world peacemaker; (4) to bolster the prestige of Communist China, probably more as an inducement to accept the Soviet drive for leadership of the "peaceful coexistence" movement than as support for any Chinese claim to unrivaled leadership in Asia.

On the first point, the Soviets were surely aware that the United States, under certain conditions, was prepared to consider active involvement in the war. While united action was a dead issue in Washington by mid-June, the Soviets (and the Chinese as well) could not have known

this. Newspaper reports of the time supported both the probability and the uncertainty of U.S. intervention. In the course of private discussions at Geneva, Molotov indicated his concern that a breakdown of the conference might lead to continued fighting right up to the point of World War III. The French and British did nothing to dispel those fears.

The possibility of renewed fighting leading to a wider war was particularly alarming to the Soviets, it would seem, as a consequence of Moscow's private debate during 1953 and 1954 over American strategic intentions and their meaning for the Soviet defense system. The views of the so-called Khrushchev wing apparently won out in the spring of 1954; the United States came to be considered fully capable of initiating a nuclear exchange and a new world war. Free-wheeling discussion in the Western press on the foreign policy implications of Eisenhower's "New Look" and Dulles's "massive retaliation" speech of January 12, 1954, was closely followed by the Soviets, who may have been persuaded of the correctness of their pessimistic conclusions regarding American strategy by the very ambiguity of American "reliance" on nuclear weapons to combat Communist aggression. In fact, it can be argued that even though the United States and its allies went to the conference table in a position of diplomatic weakness, their hands were considerably strengthened by the fact of Soviet uncertainty over what the West might do in the event the conference failed. Inasmuch as Soviet analyses by no means excluded American recklessness with nuclear weapons, Moscow might have been highly reluctant

to press too vigorously for the West's acceptance of exorbitant Viet Minh demands. Soviet awareness that the United States had seriously considered active involvement in Indochina prior to the fall of Dienbienphu may therefore have been a significant advantage for the West in the Geneva negotiations. Had the Soviets been confident that the American Administration would be highly sober, conservative, and cautious in responding to war situations, Molotov might have been instructed to play a far more audacious game while the Viet Minh intensified their military operations. Dulles's reputation as a militant anti-Communist with tremendous influence on Eisenhower probably served the Western cause well at Geneva.

One of the principal Soviet aims at the conference, then, was to diminish the possibility of American unilateral or multilateral intervention, for a high possibility would have built up tremendous pressure on Moscow to make new commitments in Southeast Asia. While this aim did not at first prevent the Soviets from seeking to capitalize on the change in government in Paris from Laniel to Mendès-France, it did work in the general direction of a reasonable settlement that would be honorable for the French and still valuable to the Viet Minh. The Russians evidently believed that, so long as the French (and the British) were kept interested in a settlement, the Americans would find it difficult to disregard their allies and intervene.

Apart from their anxiety about a wider war, however, the Russians had some more positive incentives for concluding the cease-fire. Among these the European

Defense Community treaty must have been uppermost in Molotov's mind. No evidence has been found to support the contention that Molotov explicitly offered Mendès-France a lenient Indochina settlement in return for Assembly rejection of EDC. But Molotov need not have been that obtrusive. Throughout 1953 and into 1954, Soviet propaganda was dominated by comments on EDC and the danger of a rearmed Germany. It was certainly in Soviet interests to pressure the Viet Minh for concessions to the French, since removal of the French command from Indochina would restore French force levels in Europe and thereby probably offset their need for an EDC. Soviet interests dictated the sacrifice of Viet Minh goals if necessary to prevent German re-militarization. Given Moscow's belated attention to the Indochina war, it appears that in Soviet eyes the consolidation of Viet Minh gains short of complete reunification of Vietnam was more than sufficient to justify termination of the struggle. (This view seems to have been compatible with the Chinese outlook.)

A third incentive for reaching agreement was the worldwide Soviet peace offensive which won priority in the debates that followed Stalin's death. This policy could be given added impetus through vigorous Soviet support of an Indochina settlement. In fact, it was the theme of Molotov's closing remarks to the conference on July 21. He called the accords "a major victory for the forces of peace and a major step towards a reduction of international tensions." Asserting that the conference had demonstrated the value of international negotiations

to settle dangerous disputes, Molotov said: "The results of the Geneva Conference have confirmed the rightness of the principle which is fundamental to the whole foreign policy of the Soviet Union, namely, that there are no issues in the contemporary international situation which cannot be solved and settled through negotiations and by agreements designed to consolidate peace." At a time when the United States was alleged to be jeopardizing world peace with its "policy of strength," the Soviet Union could lay claim to sparing no effort in the struggle for ways to avoid a nuclear holocaust.

In this light, Communist China was useful to the USSR as a partner in the peace offensive. While Moscow could not have wished to see China gain such prestige as to rival the Soviet Union in Asia or elsewhere, in 1954 it does seem to have considered rising Chinese influence desirable, if only because the United States would be bound to suffer a corresponding loss. As Molotov phrased it on July 21:

The Geneva Conference indicated the great positive importance that the participation of the People's Republic of China has in the settlement of urgent international problems. The course of work at this Conference has shown that any artificial obstacles on the road to China's participation in the settlement of international affairs, which are still being put up by aggressive circles of some countries, are being swept away by life itself.

Noteworthy is Molotov's omission of the additional claim, made at the time by Peking, that China's participation was absolutely essential to the solution of Asian problems.

While the Soviet foreign minister was perhaps thinking of CPR admission to the United Nations, the Chinese apparently were looking beyond the UN to the kind of full-scale diplomatic effort that would earn them Asia's respect as creators of what was later termed the "Bandung spirit." Molotov also avoided saying that China's work at the conference had earned it a status equivalent to one of the major powers. The Soviets were willing to admit that Peking had gained a new importance as a result of the conference; but they refused to go as far as the Chinese in asserting China's primacy either in Asia or worldwide.

The Soviets, then, had much to gain from a settlement of the Indochina war and much to risk if they permitted the talks to drag on inconclusively. The Viet Minh had proven their strength as a national liberation movement and had been amply rewarded with a firm territorial base assured by international agreement. With overriding interests in Western Europe, Moscow no doubt found great appeal in the idea of giving the French a face-saving "out" from Indochina. That EDC was eventually defeated in the National Assembly (in August) was testimony not to the cleverness of any Soviet "deal" with Mendès-France, but simply to a low-cost Soviet diplomatic gamble that paid off handsomely.

Chinese Objectives

For Peking, a negotiated settlement of the Indochina war represented an important opportunity to propel China forward as a major Asian power whose voice in Asian

councils could not be ignored. When the Berlin Conference decided in February 1954 to hold an international conference on Indochina, the Chinese applauded the move and prophesied then that, as an invitee, the People's Republic would gain recognition of its major role in Asian affairs. With the Geneva Conference coming at a time of vigorous Chinese diplomatic activity in India and Burma, Peking evidently considered a settlement short of a complete Viet Minh victory acceptable, since it would prove China's sincere commitment to peace. Had the CPR spurred on the Viet Minh, it would have come into conflict with the Soviets, whose aid was vital to China's economic recovery plans, and it would also have lost much of the goodwill generated by Chou En-Lai's travels. The war in Indochina had become, for China, a demonstration of its sincerity in promoting peaceful coexistence. From the tactical standpoint, devotion to peaceful coexistence may have been seen as reducing the prospects of widespread Asian support of, or participation in, the American plan for a regional alliance. With the conference ended, China was in a position to offer Asian nations an alternative to alliance with the United States -- the concept of "collective peace and security," sustained by mutual agreement to foster the five principles.

The motive force behind China's drive for Asian leadership during the period of the Geneva Conference was the theme that negotiated solutions are possible for all outstanding world problems. By the time of Geneva, Peking had already been party to the armistice in Korea, to agreement with India over Tibet, and to statements of mutual

respect issued bilaterally with India and Burma. The Sino-Indian and Sino-Burmese statements contained calls for an early settlement in Vietnam. Indeed China had joined with Moscow in supporting negotiation of the Indochina war as early as September 1953. The major role played by Chou En-lai at Geneva did more than simply affirm China's interest in peace; equally important, it established China's reputation as a flexible bargainer willing to negotiate disputes and make concessions to resolve them. After the conference, in fact, Peking declared that it had demonstrated the possibility negotiations might resolve such other East-West problems as a final Korea settlement, arms control, nuclear weapons proliferation, German unification, and European security.

China's assessment of the importance of negotiations matched its insistence that the Geneva Conference was a benchmark in the rise of the People's Republic to new prominence on the international scene. "The great significance of the convening of the Geneva Conference," the People's Daily proclaimed before its close, "lies in the fact that the Chinese People's Republic is participating in the settlement of Asian questions as one of the Great Powers, thus putting an end to the era when the Asian peoples were denied their say in their own problems." As a Great Power, China stood for a resurgent, decolonized Asia, under Peking's leadership. As stated by the authoritative World Culture:

The contributions of the CPR at the Geneva Conference to the search for peace, and its efforts to establish collective security in Asia, have received the universal recognition

and trust of the world's peace-loving peoples and nations. Because of this, the position of the CPR as one of the world's great nations has been even more affirmed and its international prestige greatly elevated. The Chinese people feel extraordinary glory because of this.

The fact that in Indochina (unlike Korea), China had been invited to join with the Big Four in discussing measures for the restoration of peace was considered by Peking to have given the CPR still higher international standing.

The prestige that China enjoyed as a participant in the conference does not fully explain why China apparently pressed for a settlement when it did, instead of prolonging the talks until better terms were available. The Panmunjom negotiations lasted for two years; why did it take less than three months to conclude a cease-fire in Indochina? There seem to have been three reasons for China's reluctance to engage in extended discussions: (1) agreement with the Soviets that the United States was capable of intervention that might spark a wider war; (2) the belief that Laos and Cambodia had been effectively neutralized; (3) satisfaction that a Communist state had been established on China's southern flank.

Peking was convinced, to judge from its published comments on the war, that influential men in Washington, including Secretary Dulles and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were quite prepared to move directly against China if circumstances permitted. Washington's warnings to Peking in 1953 left room for the continuation of Chinese aid to the Viet Minh; but Peking could never be certain when that aid might become the pretext for active American intervention. By 1954, moreover, the Chinese were showing

greater concern than before over the military effectiveness of nuclear weapons. Having been through a costly war in Korea, and having decided as early as the fall of 1952 to give priority to "socialist reconstruction" at home, Peking had nothing to gain from provoking the United States. Were the Viet Minh encouraged to strive for the maximum territorial advantage, the United States -- Peking may have calculated -- might withdraw from the conference and change the nature of the war. If those events transpired, the Chinese advocacy of peace through diplomacy would be irreparably undercut.

Peking was made clearly aware of the dangers inherent in continued fighting. At the conference, Eden told Chou En-lai that the British would stand by Washington in the event the Indochina situation moved to the showdown stage. Furthermore, with the Eisenhower-Churchill warning of June 28 that unacceptable demands made against France would "seriously aggravate" the international situation, with Dulles's seeming pressure on Mendès-France at the Paris meeting of mid-July, and with the return of Smith to the conference table, the Chinese were given unmistakable signs that Western unity had finally been achieved and some kind of coordination worked out on the settlement. At that juncture, the outstanding issue for Peking was not how much territory the DRV would ultimately obtain, but how far Cambodia and Laos could be pressed before the July 20 deadline passed.

By the deadline, as we have seen, Chou En-lai's hardened attitude in conversations with the Cambodian

and Laotian delegates had not swayed them from their hope of eventual security coverage by the United States. From China's standpoint, however, the vital agreement had been secured: none of the Indochinese states was permitted to join a military alliance or to allow the establishment of foreign military bases on its soil. Whether the Chinese recognized the alternative for the three states of obtaining protection through a device such as the SEATO Protocol is not known. When the accords were signed, Peking greeted them with the remark that the restrictions upon Indochina's ties to the West had dealt a severe blow to American regional military ambitions. So long as the United States was not permitted to establish bases in the three countries and to introduce military personnel there, China's security requirements were fulfilled even though the three states, in their internal politics, might take a strong anti-Communist line.

The supposed "neutralization" of Cambodia and Laos was coupled with the securance of a solid territory for the DRV along China's southern frontier. Further territorial gains by the Viet Minh would augment DRV resources, but would not significantly enhance China's security. With agreement by the conference to stabilize the military assets of both zones of Vietnam and to forbid their military alignment with other nations, China could feel some confidence that a divided Vietnam would not present an immediate threat. Thus, the agreements on Cambodia and Laos complemented the Vietnam accord in bolstering China's security from the south even as they also meant a sacrifice of the Viet Minh's capability for overrunning all Vietnam.

The argument here, in summary, is that the Soviet Union and Communist China were less concerned with the specific terms of the settlement than with moving the settlement to a conclusion after their basic objectives had been achieved. An agreement that would assuage the Viet Minh desire for territory, give France the satisfaction of feeling that it had upheld French interests, go far toward fulfilling Chinese security requirements and political ambitions in Southeast Asia, and reduce the possibility of a precipitate American withdrawal from the conference -- such an agreement was, to Moscow and Peking, acceptable and even desirable. They saw advantages to themselves in an early accord which, though it clearly conflicted with Viet Minh plans, was not incompatible with their own objectives.

Precisely how Chou and Molotov presented their intentions to Ho Chi Minh will probably never be known. But given the precarious political situation in South Vietnam, the multitude of armed sects and other groups hostile to the Saigon government, the continued exacerbating presence of the French, and the economic and social vulnerabilities of a society wracked by war, Peking and Moscow may have argued convincingly that South Vietnam would never cohere sufficiently to pose a viable alternative to the DRV. It may have been the Communists' expectation that the DRV would as likely assume control of the entire country by default as by an election victory in 1956. Put another way, the possibility of a prospering, anti-Communist South Vietnam may simply not have been a serious, and certainly was not an immediate, concern for either of the principal Communist powers. The Geneva Conference had

created French goodwill for Moscow and added security for Peking; in 1954, what might happen in South Vietnam may have seemed inconsequential.

Viet Minh Objectives

The Viet Minh did not emerge as "losers" in the negotiations. They received the territorial benefits of the settlement without having to cede the French or any neutral body control of enclaves in northern Vietnam. In addition, the DRV was promised an opportunity within two years to gain full control of the country through a ballot box victory, although it appears that Viet Minh leaders put more stock in a collapse of the southern regime before the election date. In Laos, the Pathet Lao had not been disarmed immediately; instead, they were permitted to regroup over a wide terrain that would make disarmament difficult. And in both Laos and Cambodia the resistance elements were to be accorded full political rights to participate, as individuals, in the 1955 elections.

In their public commentaries on the Geneva accords, Viet Minh leaders displayed full satisfaction. Military victories had gained them political recognition, they said, thanks to the support of the Soviet and Chinese delegations. As Ho proclaimed, Paris conceded Vietnam's independence and territorial integrity. Moreover, the regroupment to two zones in Vietnam was, as he put it, "a temporary action, a transitional step in the realization of a cease-fire, toward restoring peace and attaining the unification of our country by means of general elections." No "administrative partition" was intended;

nor would the "zonal arrangement" be permitted to interfere with Vietnam's future unification:

North, Central and South Viet Nam are territories of ours. Our country will certainly be unified, our entire people will surely be liberated. Our compatriots in the South were the first to wage the war of Resistance. They possess a high political consciousness. I am confident that they will place national interests above local interests, permanent interests above temporary interests, and join their efforts with the entire people in strengthening peace, achieving unity, independence and democracy all over the country.... Our people, army men and cadres from North to South, must be united closely. They must be at one in thought and deed.

And Ton Duc Thang vowed: "The Vietnam State will undoubtedly be unified through general elections."

Despite these protestations of satisfaction and confidence, Tillman Durdin's report from Geneva that members of the Viet Minh delegation were sharply disappointed by the results and vexed at pressure applied by their Chinese and Russian comrades seems on the mark. The Viet Minh command evidently believed -- and no French authority on the spot doubted this -- that they had the capability to eliminate the French from Tonkin with one major offensive and to proceed from there against a weakened, demoralized Franco-Vietnamese army in Annam. Surely Ho must have considered the possibility of American intervention, even though concern over it does not emerge as clearly from Viet Minh public commentaries as from the official Moscow and Peking organs. The Viet Minh, however, considered that the Korea experience had demonstrated that fighting and talking simultaneously was a tactic they

could pursue for two years (like the Chinese during the Panmunjom talks) in order to maximize territorial gains. Whether the Viet Minh ultimately envisaged the conquest of all Vietnam before reaching agreement with the French to cease fire is debatable; at the least, they, like the French, probably regarded maximum control of population and territory as insurance against future elections. Thus, the Viet Minh could only have regarded a settlement at the 17th parallel as a tactical blunder in violation of the guerrilla war theory and practice they had mastered.

Forfeiture of considerable territory in Vietnam was undoubtedly not the only ground for the Viet Minh's displeasure. Their frequent pronouncements on the "indivisibility" of the Viet Minh, Free Khmer, and Pathet Lao were largely ignored by Chou and Molotov, whose agreement on Laos and Cambodia seems to have given priority to Chinese interests. Account had been taken, as Chou insisted, of the desirability of integrating the resistance forces into the national Khmer and Laotian communities; but those forces were eventually to be disarmed and disbanded, or withdrawn. Conceivably, the Viet Minh leaders never intended to leave Laos, or were assured by the Chinese and Soviets that the agreements reached regarding the Pathet Lao were not meant to exclude future North Vietnamese support. Nevertheless, in the future any Viet Minh contacts with the rebels would be a clear violation of the Geneva accords and would provide justification for intensified Laotian ties to the West.

The Viet Minh also yielded ground on national elections. Their hopes for an all-Vietnamese political

settlement soon after the cease-fire were quashed by the Soviets and Chinese, who were disposed to accept a longer waiting period. Furthermore, the political settlement itself was not given the priority the Viet Minh had originally demanded; it would be achieved, according to the Final Declaration, "in the near future," as the result rather than the precondition of a military (cease-fire) settlement. Finally, when the time for a political settlement was at hand, the declaration specified, an international body, rather than the Viet Minh and "South" Vietnamese alone, would supervise it. The overriding interests of the Soviets and Chinese had taken the heart out of the initial Viet Minh proposals of May 10 and, in addition, had considerably undercut their "fallback" positions expressed in late May and June. Jean Chauvel was apparently correct when he perceived, after private talks with the Chinese, that the Viet Minh were really on the end of a string being manipulated from Moscow and Peking: when they moved forward too quickly, Chou and Molotov were always at hand to pull them back to a more accommodating position. Briefly, the Viet Minh very likely felt they had been compelled to give away much of what they had earned, even while they acquired the attributes of sovereignty for which they had fought.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE PARTICIPANTS: THE WESTERN BIG THREE

The British

For Great Britain, the accords signaled the end of a war that more than once threatened to involve the

United States and risk a regional conflagration. Had the point of direct American intervention been reached, the Churchill government would have been faced with an extraordinarily difficult decision: whether to join with an old ally in a war venture that Britain considered politically wrong and militarily foolish, or to break with Washington and thereby throw into question the Anglo-American alliance. Britain consistently advised the United States to delay irreversible military steps, including formation of a Southeast Asia defense organization, until the Communists had been given an opportunity to make good their proclaimed devotion to a peaceful solution in Indochina. Since this advice was accepted, if grudgingly, by the United States, the British were not required to choose between following and ignoring American leadership.

A diplomatic untangling of the Indochina problem, Britain's first hope, also became in large measure its responsibility. If the allies were not to be pressed into a military response, it was as much up to Eden as to Bidault (and later Mendès-France) to establish the grounds for a settlement. Although final agreement at the conference depended on Soviet and Chinese readiness to offer equitable terms, Eden's own contributions cannot be exaggerated. Working closely with Molotov and Chou, Eden apparently earned their respect as a forthright, flexible, but firm negotiator. That the accords were drawn up testified to Eden's persistence. They were a triumph of British diplomacy, so much so that the Chinese and Soviets, in press commentaries immediately following the close of the conference, accorded the UK delegation

the unusual accolade of having rendered, along with the Communist delegations, the most important services in the agonizing process of reaching agreement.

At the same time as the British successfully pushed through a settlement by diplomatic rather than military means, they also reserved the right to join with the United States in a regional security arrangement immediately after the conference. As Eden had told Chou, the formation of a SEATO would not be put off, even though the Associated States would not become members. British membership in SEATO represented another significant diplomatic victory. On several occasions Britain informed the United States that a Southeast Asia pact formed in advance of or during the Geneva deliberations might be interpreted as provocative by the Chinese and reduce, if not eliminate, chances for a settlement. The British never opposed the concept of SEATO, but they cautioned against poor timing. SEATO's establishment in September 1954 was thus doubly welcomed by London: it satisfied Britain's conviction that a regional organization should be formed to preserve what remained of Indochina, not to recover it all from the Viet Minh.

Britain's opposition to forming SEATO before or during the conference, in part to avoid provoking the Chinese, fitted London's aspirations for better Sino-British relations. Quite unlike the dominant voices in Washington, Churchill and Eden were amenable to attempting to achieve some kind of working relationship with Peking, particularly in view of the ongoing guerrilla war in Malaya. The conference, as Eden noted in his June 23 speech to the Commons, had resulted in an improvement of

Sino-British relations, demonstrated by Peking's agreement on June 17, after four years of silence, to exchange chargés d'affaires. In the remaining month of the conference, moreover, British youth delegations traveled to China, and there were hopeful comments from both countries on the possibilities for stepped up trade and the exchange of cultural delegations. Thus, in sharp contrast to the United States, Great Britain fully exploited this period of harmony through diplomacy to change, rather than preserve, its pattern of contact with Peking.

The French

France probably had as much cause for satisfaction with the outcome at Geneva as any other party to the conference. Paris had extricated itself from la sale guerre with honor, yet had also retained a foothold in South Vietnam and a close relationship with Cambodia and Laos. The French Union lost much of its strength, but not all of its appeal, in Indochina. At least in mid-1954, it appeared that French cultural and economic interests in all three former colonies would be substantially preserved; and even the DRV had indicated, at the close as well as at the beginning of the negotiations, that it aspired to membership in the Union. French military power would have to be surrendered, of course; but French influence could (and did) remain in all three countries.

While the British were ready to join the United States and other interested nations in SEATO, the French clearly intended, as evidenced by their concern over the location of the demarcation line, that South Vietnam have

a defensible territory within which to establish a stable regime competitive with the DRV. As already observed, Paris was motivated by more than altruism; it wanted a substantial territorial base as much for the preservation of French economic holdings in the South as for the future security of the Saigon government. To judge from the French attitude, the Paris government, no less than the American Administration, looked forward to participating fully in the consolidation and rehabilitation of the GVN within the two years before nationwide elections.

The Americans

The United States viewed the conference results with mixed emotions. On the one hand, the terms of the settlement conformed surprisingly well with those the Administration had agreed with the French and British would be acceptable. Even as the Administration could not do more than agree to "respect" and "take note" of the Geneva accords, it had to concede that they represented a reasonable outcome, given the chaotic state of relations among the allies before the conference, the rejection by France of a possible military alternative, and the undeniable military superiority of the Viet Minh beyond as well as within Vietnam. On the other hand, the settlement, viewed through the special lenses of the Eisenhower-Dulles Administration, also contained the elements of defeat. Part of the free world's "assets" in the Far East had been "lost" to the Sino-Soviet bloc (much as China had been "lost" to Mao Tse-tung's forces); our allies had begged off when offered a chance to deal with the

Communists by force of arms and, later, by an Asian-Western anti-Communist alliance ready for action; and the United States had been compelled to attend an international conference which not only confirmed to the Communists by diplomacy what they had gained by force, but also enhanced their image elsewhere in Asia and around the world as standard-bearers of peace.

A point-by-point comparison of the Seven Points with the accords indicates that, quite apart from what had happened to American interests in Southeast Asia as a consequence of the conference, American diplomacy, on balance, had succeeded:

1. The integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia were preserved, and Viet Minh forces were to be withdrawn or disarmed and disbanded.

2. Southern Vietnam was retained, although without an enclave in the North and with the partition line somewhat south of Dong Hoi.

3. Laos, Cambodia, and "retained" Vietnam were not prevented from forming "non-Communist regimes" (in the case of Vietnam, within the two-year pre-election period); nor were they expressly forbidden "to maintain adequate forces for internal security." Vietnam's right to import arms and other war materiel, however, was restricted to piece-by-piece replacement, and its foreign advisers were limited to the number in the country at the war's close.

- 4-5. Recalling Dulles's interpretation that elections should be put off as long as possible to give the Vietnamese government the best chance to stabilize itself and the country, the accords did not "contain

political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control"; nor did they "exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means." Although Dulles and Mendès-France preferred that no date be set for the elections, the two-year compromise gave the Americans, the French, and the South Vietnamese a considerable breathing spell. For Washington, therefore, the first priority was to provide Saigon with economic assistance and political support; elections were still two years away.

6. The accords expressly provided for the transfer of individuals desiring to move from one zone to another.

7. The accords did seem, at the time, to have basically fulfilled the precondition of providing "effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement." Although the machinery would be the ICC's rather than the UN's, Under Secretary Smith noted that the ICC would have a veto power on important questions (referring, evidently, to the unanimity rule); would include one genuine neutral (India) and one pro-Western government (Canada); and would be permitted full freedom of movement into demilitarized zones and frontier and coastal areas.

Private official assessments of the conference depicted it as a major free-world defeat whereas, publicly, Administration spokesmen considered the final settlement the best possible under adverse military and diplomatic circumstances. This fact leads to the conclusion that where American diplomacy fell down was not at Geneva but during the Indochina crisis as a whole. Nearly all

the revised American negotiatory principles had emerged unscathed; but American objectives in Indochina -- the elimination of the Viet Minh threat, retention of the strategically vital Tonkin Delta, and obstruction of Communist political and military expansion in the region -- had still been defeated. The United States had maneuvered admirably in its self-limited role of interested party; but the Administration, convinced that any attrition of what had been regarded as "free-world" territory and resources was inimical to American global interests, could only view the settlement as the acceptance of terms from the Communist victors. The task in Vietnam in the two years ahead, therefore, was to work with what had been "retained" in the hope, by no means great, that the Diem government could pull the country up by its bootstraps in time to present a meaningful alternative to Ho Chi Minh's DRV.

IX. NEGOTIATING ON VIETNAM: SOME LESSONS FROM GENEVA

In the difficult search for a peaceful solution of the present war in Vietnam, abundant reference has been made to the 1954 Geneva agreements by all the parties to the conflict. Hanoi and Washington, the National Liberation Front and Saigon, Moscow and Peking have all referred at one time or another to the need to "return to the essentials of the Geneva accords." Since the extension of the war to North Vietnam, the Chinese have dropped their declarations of faith in reaching a solution on the basis of the accords; but the other powers, for diverse reasons, continue to proclaim a sincere interest in them. While Peking insists that the accords have been "torn to shreds" and "trampled upon" because of American air attacks on the sovereign DRV, all the other parties concerned cling, albeit each with its own interpretations and motivations, to the final conference documents. What is noteworthy in all this is that there appears to be so little interest in holding another Geneva Conference to bring about a return to the basic principles of the earlier one. Some American proposals, to be sure, have favored an "international conference" over direct, bilateral talks with Hanoi. But to judge from Hanoi's responses, the DRV, when it is ready to negotiate, will want some form of Vietnamese-American contact, not an international round-table; and the Soviets have indicated no interest in setting up a multilateral conference before DRV and Viet Cong preconditions have been met.

Before inquiring whether a Geneva-type conference would be in the best interests of the United States, we

should first decide what we mean by "a Geneva-type conference." Considering the positions now taken by the parties concerned, it cannot mean a duplicate of the first conference. Communist China would be extremely unlikely to attend except under circumstances that promised unilateral, speedy American withdrawal from South Vietnam without substantial compensations from the North. Peking would seem to have an interest in attending such a conference if only to influence the DRV's bargaining position. On the other hand the talks would not merely provide the diplomatic trappings for America's removal from the scene, but would undoubtedly involve genuine bargaining with prospects for further Soviet-American "collusion." Peking's participation, therefore, would be a major reversal of its policy toward the war.

"A Geneva-type conference" can only be defined, and should only be understood, in the broadest sense, as a conference involving not solely the belligerents, but as in 1954 all those parties having a direct interest in the war, desiring to state their views, and found mutually acceptable to the Soviet and British co-chairmen. This definition would necessarily embrace the DRV, the NLF, the Government of Vietnam (GVN), the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain. Those Asian countries providing substantial assistance to the allied war effort have already indicated their interest in participating. But inasmuch as obliging them might precipitate a Soviet demand that all the nations aiding the DRV should likewise be represented, it would probably be useless, not to mention potentially disadvantageous (see below), to press for the seating of non-Communist Asian nations.

A conference on the model of Geneva might well be in the interests of the United States. First, the 1954 conference supports the view that the presence of more than one adversary, while it might complicate the bargaining process, may also tend to increase friction in the opposition camp. The more parties involved, whether Communist or not, the more interests will be at stake and the greater will be the likelihood of conflicting views. For the same reason that the presence of the Soviet Union and the NLF might favor an acceptable settlement, the direct participation of, say, Thailand, Australia, and the Republic of Korea would tend to diminish (although in lesser proportion) American control over the negotiations.

The Geneva example might also be helpful in determining the format of the negotiations and the GVN's participation in them. The main round-table discussions could be separated from bilateral on-the-spot talks in Vietnam between willing GVN and Viet Cong authorities. Leaving aside the admittedly critical question whether the GVN or the NLF would accept or could be made to accept that arrangement, it might be useful at least to consider its theoretical utility. Some kind of understanding between Saigon and the NLF would seem indispensable to a genuine cease-fire, and clearly the most logical and feasible method would be for the combatants who must some day live with one another to work out an arrangement -- separately at the province, district, and village levels if need be -- that can bring hostilities to a halt. A distinction is therefore suggested between the technical discussions that would have to take place in the field, in which the GVN would have the primary role, and the

broader military -political discussions at Geneva (or elsewhere), in which the GVN would be represented but would essentially be guided by the American negotiators.

The view that the presence of more than one adversary might be to our advantage rests also on the belief that recognition of the NLF as an independent entity for purposes of negotiations may increase the prospects for better terms. Even if the thesis is accepted that the Front has long been absolutely obedient to Hanoi's orders, the argument may still stand that, in the course of international negotiations, recognition of the Front's distinctiveness may enhance the possibility that the Front will negotiate and act independently. At no time during the 1954 talks did any influential American official suggest that the Chinese and Soviets were working at cross purposes with Ho Chi Minh's delegation and therefore presenting the West with potential bargaining opportunities. As we have seen, the three Communist parties did have separate and not always compatible interests that proved important in attaining a settlement. Although the analogy with the present is far from perfect, the prospect cannot be dismissed that a "second Geneva" arrangement in which the Viet Cong, Hanoi, and presumably Moscow would be recognized as parties to the negotiations might reveal conflicts of interests not apparent to us now. The Viet Cong, after all, have been fighting for nearly a decade; like the Viet Minh, they are a revolutionary movement that conceivably harbors as yet undeclared political ambitions and may be ready to take greater risks than its comrades in the other Communist states. When such crucial questions as regroupment, disarmament, territorial control, and

composition of the southern government arise, we may well find some exploitable differences of view among the three Communist parties and a Hanoi considerably more flexible than the Front.

When the adversary comes to the conference table, what does Geneva teach us about the tactics that may be used to induce a settlement? After all, there must be some basis or bases for persuading the opponent that he should place his own interests above those of his partners. First, one's bargaining reputation obviously has an important bearing on the opponent's bargaining attitude. As observed above, in the discussion of Communist motives for working toward a settlement, the reputation of the Eisenhower-Dulles administration for being adamant and inflexible toward, and having a predilection to resort to the use of force against, the Communist world probably greatly assisted the Western side. The American propensity to seek a military solution in Indochina, even at the risk of a wider war, seems to have been taken seriously by Chou and Molotov, particularly when alluded to by the British and French delegates. By early making apparent our own inflexibility and pessimism concerning the outcome of the talks, we may have led the Communists to believe that their inflexibility could endanger the conference and plunge Indochina into renewed fighting on a broader, more dangerous scale. What is important to elucidate here is that armed force was a factor because it was potentially usable by the United States. For future reference, we may wish to ponder how the threat of the use of force might be exploited for bargaining advantages. On the basis of Geneva 1954, it is suggested that a certain reputation for

callousness and lack of restraint,* by making such a threat credible, might have some influence on the opponent.

Also relevant to bargaining reputation, to judge from Geneva, is one's presumed desire for a settlement. If one has consistently espoused not simply the holding of discussions but a certain commitment to bring them to fruition, one's bargaining position may be undercut at the outset. In 1954, to illustrate, it was well known to friend and foe alike that the United States considered negotiations undesirable except from a position of clear military advantage; the mere call for a conference on Indochina was as unwelcome to Washington as the negotiations themselves. As suggested above, the lack of an American commitment to a peaceful settlement of the war may have been an important offsetting influence, given the British and French disposition to accept an "honorable" settlement. Similarly, in future negotiations we may want to refrain from either outwardly indicating great anxiety that talks commence, or hastily retreating from stated positions in order to promote progress. Without precautions of this kind, the Communists might be led to believe, and to act on the belief, that the United States was desperate for a face-saving settlement.

* Recklessness may be made to appear as the characteristic of powerful minorities within and outside the (American) leadership. Negotiators might stress, for instance, that a failure to gain concessions would compel the use of force advocated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and/or Congressional committees, but hitherto withheld. To maintain the credibility of the threat our negotiators would have to know, and the opposition would have to believe, that the Administration was prepared to use such force in the event concessions were not forthcoming.

In this connection, we may recall Dulles's attitude during the negotiations of refusing to consider them so sacrosanct as to preclude the option of breaking them off. The Communist parties represented at the 1954 talks, aware of the risks inherent in an American walk-out, consistently made concessions of sufficient importance to ensure that the negotiations would keep going. A lesson for future reference might therefore be that the United States should not be caught with a vested interest in the permanency of negotiations; we should always have the option of rejecting protracted, unfruitful discussions in favor of other diplomatic or military moves. The availability of that option, once made apparent to the opponents, may either influence them to soften their position or reveal to us their lack of interest in genuine bargaining.

This last point relates to the general problem of what, after all, is negotiable. In retrospect, it seems difficult to reconcile the rather firm attitude of the French and British, from the very beginning of the conference's Indochina phase, with the Viet Minh's obvious military gains. The French, for example, talked at the first plenary session as though the war was at a stalemate; they conceded the Viet Minh nothing save the value of being a party to the negotiations with a basis for bargaining. As matters developed, France's firmness proved eminently wise: Viet Minh gains throughout Vietnam and in parts of Laos and Cambodia actually were negotiable even though they may not have seemed so to the outside observer. For reasons not entirely clear, the Communists were not nearly so perspicacious. The Chinese failed to make their

concessions conditional on such things as admission to the United Nations, an American initiative on the Taiwan problem, or diplomatic recognition by France. Moreover, the Communists did not follow their usual practice, displayed at Panmunjom for one example, of considering everything negotiable at least in the first round of bargaining. Whatever else may be said of the Eisenhower-Dulles "roll-back" policy, it did succeed at Geneva, with considerable French support, in inducing consecutive readjustments of the Communists' position in part because it refused to concede that Viet Minh gains were irrevocable. Should negotiations on Vietnam again come about, the lesson of 1954 would seem to be that the United States should begin by considering all questions relating to Vietnam as negotiable, even to the raising of demands (such as free elections in North Vietnam or the complete withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops from the South) that have a limited or nonexistent chance of being accepted by the Communists.

Finally, the status of forces is not only bound to influence the negotiations, but may also affect implementation of the final agreement. Even under extremely adverse military circumstances, the presence of troops in large numbers may weigh heavily on the outcome of peace talks. Dienbienphu was a military defeat and a psychological catastrophe; yet the French still had the bulk of their armed forces in the Delta, in Annam, and in Cochin China. No one could deny that the Viet Minh had seized the offensive; but French military strength was an incontrovertible fact that the Communists had to take into account, which they did when they proposed partition.

Thus, in 1954, the French demonstrated that bargaining from military weakness, while retaining the bulk of one's military forces intact, might be disadvantageous in many ways but it did not make political concessions inevitable. By retaining a tight hold on the Hanoi-Haiphong axis, by refusing to buckle under in southern Vietnam during the peace discussions, and by publicizing a readiness to send reinforcements from France in the event of no agreement, Paris partially compensated for the setback at Dienbienphu in the first place and, thereafter, influenced the course of Saigon politics by maintaining an armed presence in Vietnam until early 1956. Today, when another Dienbienphu seems unlikely and when the enemy cannot count on total military victory, the large-scale American presence in Vietnam can be correspondingly more persuasive in negotiation. Even in the wake of an unsatisfactory settlement, the United States might emulate the phased French withdrawal as a means of continuing to influence the course of events in the south well after beginning to evacuate forces and bases.

The potential advantages of holding another Geneva conference must be balanced against the unlikelihood that it will be held. DRV leaders are evidently highly conscious of the Geneva experience and are determined to avoid repeating what they regard as a grievous error. Compromises with the "imperialist powers" were attempted twice in 1946^{*} and again in 1954 without achieving complete

^{*}During and after the 1946 negotiations with the French, Ho Chi Minh apparently prevailed over some ranking Central Committee members who argued that compromises with the French were ephemeral and that long-term struggle

national independence. It is highly unlikely that the North Vietnamese would again risk their power to make independent decisions for the sake of the separate interests and aspirations of their allies.

Captured North Vietnamese materials confirm their staunch opposition to negotiations except under conditions certain to bring about an American withdrawal and the completion of the August Revolution. Mindful of their past failure fully to exploit military gains for political guarantees, the North Vietnamese insist on ensuring that the military phase of the struggle is won, or nearly so, before serious negotiations commence. Presumably, a cease-fire will not again be offered in exchange for promises of a future political settlement. Fighting and talking simultaneously is the only acceptable tactic, they say; presumably, when the fighting stops, the talking will have reached a stage of agreement eminently favorable to them.

against them was the only acceptable approach. Ho reportedly recognized that he had made a bargain favorable to France, but still hoped that France would fulfill its promises of independence without bloodshed. See Jean Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée: Indochine 1945-1947, Amiot-Dumont, Paris, 1953, ch. entitled "La Corde Raide."

Present-day North Vietnamese publications still ruefully mention the 1946 negotiations. A December 1966 article in the periodical Tuyen Huan (Propaganda and Training), for example, said of them: "After the August [1945] Revolution, our people fervently hoped for peace to build up the country. Therefore, at times our government compromised with French colonialism. But the more we compromised, the more French colonialism advanced because they were determined to steal our country one more time...." See Joint Publications Research Service, Translations on North Vietnam, No. 112 (February 27, 1967), 6-7.

With this adamant attitude toward negotiations in general, and toward an international conference on the model of Geneva in particular, the prospects for reconvening the 1954 conference appear exceedingly dim. The type of conference Hanoi wants probably is one in which it plays the dominant role in bargaining with the United States and the GVN. Always jealous of its independence and proud of the way in which it has managed to safeguard that independence amidst the buffeting waves of the Sino-Soviet rift, the DRV would not wish to have its national destiny again made subject to the approval or compromises of other powers. This standpoint would likely extend to the NLF. Although North Vietnam has consistently maintained that a settlement of the war in South Vietnam requires the United States and the GVN to negotiate directly with (and thereby recognize) the Front, Hanoi undoubtedly believes it has sufficient control over the Front to exercise some kind of veto power over the results of any negotiations concerning the South. Conceivably, if the Front were to carry on discussions with the United States and the GVN, Hanoi would find itself in the same position as China and the Soviet Union in 1954. While the Front authorities would be engaged in the actual bargaining, their position would be subject to Hanoi's modifications.

| Any advantages Hanoi might see in reconvening the Geneva Conference -- or, for that matter, entering into any type of negotiation -- would probably have to await a prior determination that total military victory could not be achieved except at unacceptably high costs. Should the time come when those costs, perhaps more political than military, do appear unwarrantedly high to them, the

North Vietnamese may begin to calculate what a second Geneva would mean. At the same time, the United States may also consider what it can do, not simply to formulate tactics during negotiations, but also to influence Hanoi's disposition toward discussions. If our particular aim is another Geneva-type conference, we might stress this in our talks about negotiations. Should de-escalation be considered feasible, for example, it might be quietly conditioned, not on reciprocal North Vietnamese military concessions, but on their agreement to a Geneva-style format that would include both the Viet Cong and the Soviet Union. And in that eventuality the United States might consider the merits of broadening discussions to include Laos and Cambodia.

Gurlov

NEGOTIATIONS AND VIETNAM: A CASE STUDY OF THE 1954 GENEVA CONFERENCE

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